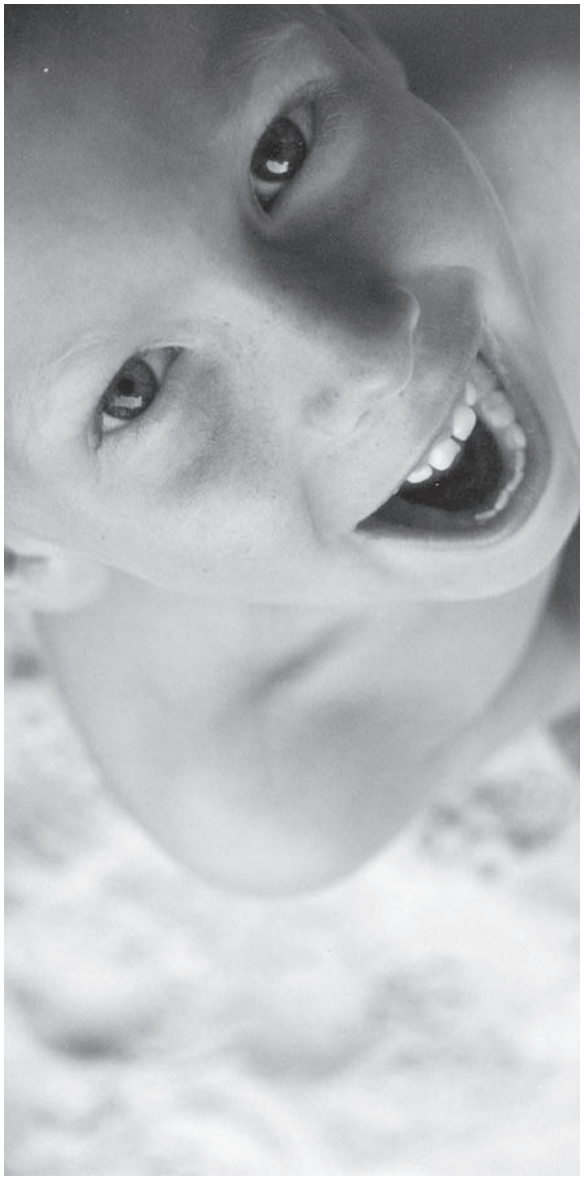
The Development Process



" Children are our most valuable natural resource."

- Herbert Hoover

The Development Process

Once you have completed the tasks described in the Predevelopment Activities section, the planning, design and construction of the physical facility can begin. Revisiting your vision throughout this development process will help keep you from getting lost in the details. Keep in mind that modifying your vision, as well as your business and financing plans, may be necessary as you discover new information during the planning and design work.

Planning and designing a child care or school age center is a multifaceted, fascinating and exciting process. Think of it as solving a 3-dimensional puzzle, with a large collection of inherent "shoulds", "musts", and "wish-I-coulds" that form the ground rules. You will spend alot of time just gathering information: guidelines, regulatory requirements, recommended practices, codes, product literature and advice. The design process will be an evolving progression and is an opportunity to explore how aspects of the physical form of the facility can best serve your goals. You should experiment with different possible locations for classrooms, ideas for how you might shape and enliven activity areas within classrooms, options for building materials, heating systems and lighting systems, and strategies for how your support spaces will best work. Each piece of information you gather and each experiment in the planning and design phase takes you a step closer to realizing your goals, constantly evolving towards a final solution. Don't be discouraged; all the issues can't be solved at once. But if you allow each step and decision to inform the next steps and decisions, you WILL hear the voices of children in your center one day!

Employing the services of an architect experienced with zoning codes, building codes and early child care and school age center licensing regulations is strongly recommended for planning and design work. The various regulatory requirements are complex; an incomplete or false analysis of applicable requirements can be extremely costly to your project.

A typical sequence of general development steps, described in the pages that follow, includes:

1. Selecting an architect
2. Programming the spaces needed in the facility
3. Defining a project budget
4. Establishing feasibility and securing a site and/or building
5. Designing the facility and creating the Construction Documents

6. Submitting facility plans for regulatory reviews
7. Building the facility

Develop a project schedule recognizing that there are many processes and tasks that need to be included and juggled in your timeline. Think through all the research, design development and various regulatory reviews needed along the way. Provide adequate time to accomplish these things, and also extra time as a contingency for unexpected delays. Ask consultants and other child care and school age center operators about their experiences. And refer to the "The Child Care Center Licensing Guidebook" referenced in Appendix B for a good timeline of the licensing process.

SELECTING AN ARCHITECT

An architect can help you immeasurably through the entire design and construction process. He/she has expertise to advise you in site selection, assist with programming, design the physical facility, coordinate the zoning and building code review process as well as the licensing review process and act as your representative during the administration of the contract for construction.

One of the best ways to select an architect is to get references from those involved in existing programs, especially ones that you admire. Talk to local child care center operators, developers, general contractors, licensing personnel and your local chapter of the American Institute of Architects. Interview several of those recommended and see examples of their work. Choosing someone that has experience in the design of child care and school age centers and who is familiar with their operational needs is strongly recommended. Be sure to choose someone with whom you can communicate comfortably and who you feel will respect your ideas and your budget.

PROGRAMMING

As a result of your predevelopment work, including your needs assessment, market analysis, and business plan, you will have determined the appropriate mix of age groups, types of services and the number of children that you intend to serve. This information is used to determine how many classrooms you will need. Be sure to review the licensing requirements for the maximum group sizes allowed in each classroom. The number of classrooms, along with the other rooms and spaces needed, should be translated by the architect into a 'Description of Spaces' (architecturally referred to as a 'Program Statement').

The Description of Spaces will list the name and appropriate square footage for each room, the number of children served in each room, any special equipment needs and desirable adjacencies to other spaces. Be sure to include square footage allotments for circulation spaces like hallways and for the area taken up by the walls themselves. The sum of square feet needed for all spaces and walls will provide an overall size needed for your desired center.

The Description of Spaces is a very helpful and important document in your early planning phases. You may revise the Description several times before you arrive at an overall size for your program that meets your budget and program goals. The Description of Spaces can also begin with a statement of your vision and the goals you wish to achieve, thereby keeping your direction clear as you prioritize space needs. It is important that the Description of Spaces is clear, thoughtfully considered and inclusive of all of your needs. Changing space requirements during the design of the facility can slow down the process and add expense.

The types of spaces you will need to provide fall into three general categories: classroom spaces, support spaces and outdoor spaces, all of which will be addressed in greater depth in later chapters.

Classroom Spaces

In general, each age group will need a separate classroom. Licensing requirements describe the maximum group sizes allowed per classroom as well as the minimum square feet per child required for children's activities within classrooms. Built-in items like diaper changing areas, food preparation areas, storage units and children's toileting areas may not be considered as part of the required minimum area per child, so be sure to include enough square footage to accommodate these needs in your Description of Spaces. In addition to the square footage required for licensing children's classrooms, you may choose to include additional square footage for special purpose spaces like an art room, a lunch room, a gross motor room for indoor play during inclement weather or a single flexible multi-purpose space which can accommodate one or more of the above uses.

Support Spaces

Support spaces are all other spaces besides the classrooms and usually include: entry / waiting and reception / parent check-in areas, director's office, kitchen and pantry, teachers' work room / resource center, staff lounge, storage areas, toilet facilities for staff, laundry, janitorial area, mechanical and electrical equipment spaces, and circulation

spaces. Support spaces plus the area occupied by the walls themselves can account for 40 – 60% of the total facility size.

Outdoor Spaces

The primary outdoor space is typically the fenced outdoor play area, which must be sufficiently large to accommodate all the groups using it at any given time. Outdoor play promotes physical development and coordination, and is required by licensing. Plan the outdoor space such that it will accommodate group activities, age appropriate play equipment, and opportunities for a variety of outdoor experiences. Other outdoor spaces you will most likely need to provide include:

- Any required staff parking
- Family drop-off/short term parking spaces
- Location for garbage dumpster, recycling containers, diaper service containers and appropriate access for their collection
- Storage - for outdoor toys and for maintenance equipment

Child care center licensors may allow an off-site outdoor play area, but only when you have no other option. You must consult with them prior to committing to a site with this constraint to ensure your proposal will be acceptable.

PROJECT BUDGET

Generally, project budgets are the result of either a restricted / limited funding source that fixes the maximum allowable construction cost or a conceptual design process that identifies how much funding should be secured. The budget for construction will most often reflect a compromise between what you'd really like to build and how much funding can be obtained and supported by your program. Some of the factors that will affect your construction cost include:

- Elements that must be included to meet current licensing, building code or zoning code requirements
- Elements that you would like include in order to create spaces consistent with your defined vision and operational philosophy
- Material and equipment choices based on durability and life expectancy
- Conditions of the site and/or existing building

It's critical that you provide contingencies for both your schedule and your finances. Even the best-planned construction projects encounter unexpected delays and additional expenses - it will almost inevitably take longer and, therefore, cost

more than originally anticipated. Contingencies should be larger and longer when remodeling an existing building, as hidden complexities frequently arise. New construction is more predictable, and sometimes costs less than renovating an existing building. Consult with your architect regarding an appropriate contingency amount and either incorporate this into your total funding package, or set aside this amount within your organization's other finances.

The difference between Construction Cost and Project Cost is important to recognize. The Project Cost will include all of the consultant expenses, application fees, permit and inspection fees, sales tax, contingencies, land costs if purchasing property, furnishings and other miscellaneous expenses above and beyond the Construction Cost.

The total Project Cost must be weighed against the amount of income and expenses that your center can support through time, in combination with the amount of funding that can be mobilized at the time of construction. Should you obtain a loan to help cover construction costs, be sure to include the costs necessary to repay the loan into your projections of annual expenses.

APPROPRIATE FACILITY LOCATION

Once you have developed a Description of Spaces, you can begin searching for a suitable building and/or site. Options include building a new facility or remodeling and/or expanding an existing building. Important factors and characteristics to consider in the selection of a site include:

- Land use zoning that allows a child care or school age center
- Size of lot and existing building (if any) needed to accommodate program needs
- Condition of land and any existing structures
- Ease of vehicular access and sufficient area to accommodate any required parking, drop-off areas and associated drive aisles
- Compatibility with surrounding building and property uses
- Noise levels of adjacent roadway and property uses
- Affect of playground noise on adjacent property uses
- Well-draining soils at outdoor play areas

- Solar orientation (for daylighting in classrooms as well as sunny and dry outdoor play areas)
- Potential for future expansion
- Proximity to targeted clientele
- Proximity to public transportation
- Proximity to local emergency services
- Existence of hazardous materials (lead paint, asbestos, buried tanks)
- Proximity to heavily traveled roads / presence of vehicular pollution
- Availability of existing utilities (water, power, sewer, gas, telephone, cable)
- Capacity of wells and septic systems to adequately serve new facility
- Approval of existing wells and septic systems by local authorities
- Purchase or leasing costs
- Cost implications of code required upgrades when converting existing spaces
- Cost of annual property taxes and insurance

It is difficult to predict how long it might take to locate and obtain control (through purchase agreement, lease or partnership agreement) of a site suitable for your project, but it is very important that you do careful research prior to committing to the site. In order to evaluate the suitability of a site you may need to do a zoning code analysis, preliminary design and cost estimating to ensure that your desired program is feasible. An architect can assess applicable land use code development standards, such as parking requirements and setbacks, as well as existing site conditions, appropriate orientation, and potential for expansion. (See next chapter under Building and Zoning Codes)

When considering locating your program in an existing facility, it's critical that you are fully aware of all the facility upgrades that may be required by code to allow a program for children. For example, sprinklers may be required and may not be within your budget. There are also additional fire and life safety requirements if spaces for children are to be located above the first floor or below ground level. Consult with an architect and/or code officials (land use code, building code, electrical code, mechanical code and fire code) to identify potential additional expenses inherent in remodeling an existing space.

In addition, existing structures may contain hazardous materials such as lead paint or asbestos. A Hazardous Materials (Hazmat) Survey, conducted by specialists, will report existing hazardous materials that should be mitigated prior to allowing children to occupy the spaces. Mitigation work can be quite expensive so be sure to investigate this issue early in your planning stages.

SCHEMATIC DESIGN

Once you have secured an appropriate site or building the design process can begin in earnest. The first phase is schematic design, during which your architect will generate several different basic room layout and site development options. The options will include all rooms listed in the Description of Spaces developed earlier and will respond to constraints and opportunities inherent in the building or the site. These options will be described through floor plans, and possibly elevations or perspectives, at a small scale (e.g. 1/16" = 1' - 0" or 1/8" = 1' - 0"). These quick diagrammatic studies will help to clarify and solve issues regarding adjacency and configuration of rooms, potential opportunities and restrictions of your selected site / building, and how the facility design can meet your goals. Use the schematic design phase to "think outside the box," to consider the widest variety of possible approaches and solutions and to stretch your imagination to incorporate creative ideas that will enliven your center.

Once the preferred ideas and layouts from each option have been identified, the architect will prepare the schematic design from which a cost estimate can be calculated. Your architect, a general contractor or a professional cost estimator can prepare a cost estimate. This cost estimate will be more accurate than any earlier estimates that were based on preliminary designs during site selection, but will still be relatively generic. Hopefully the cost estimate will approximate your established budget. If not, modifications to the design may be required before proceeding to ensure the costs of your design match your budget.

Once you have settled on a schematic design you should review the plans with DSHS Division of Child Care and Early Learning (DCCEL) licensors and health specialists (see below, DSHS Licensing Review) to obtain input from them prior to proceeding.

The Schematic Design process can take anywhere between 2 - 6 weeks, depending upon the complexity and size of the project and the schedules of the participants.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

During Design Development, the schematic design is refined and developed in greater detail. Drawings are produced at a larger scale (e.g. 1/4" = 1' – 0") with greater attention to exact and code compliant dimensions. Decisions are made regarding final room locations and sizes. Exploration continues

with respect to specific locations and configurations of elements such as built-in cabinets, plumbing fixtures, windows and flooring. If you are building a new facility, the form of the building will be resolved, including the shape of the roof, the location of doors and windows. The location of the children's outdoor play areas and other site amenitieswill be finalized.

By the end of the Design Development phase the architect will have generated a site plan, floor plans (showing room locations and sizes and all window and door locations), exterior elevations (side views from outside showing exterior walls, roofs, doors, windows and materials), and interior elevations (showing interior windows, fixtures, shelves and cabinetry on interior walls).

Design Development can take from 4 – 12 weeks, again depending upon the complexity and size of the project and the schedules of the participants.

CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTS

Construction Documents are the result of continued refinement and detailed description of the design. Construction Documents typically consist of both a set of drawings and a project manual (a written document) that together describe, as thoroughly as possible, what the builder is responsible for building.

In addition to the floor plans, exterior elevations and interior elevations mentioned above, Construction Documents include many detail drawings, door and window schedules, as well as written specifications in the project manual describing exactly which materials and methods are to be used. If any subconsultants (mechanical, electrical, structural or civil engineers; landscape architects) are needed their drawings and specifications will be incorporated into the documents as well.

It is important that your architect be as thorough as possible in describing the scope of work in the Construction Documents. Complete documents reduce the potential for confusion and guesswork during construction, which can lead to revisions and inefficient progress. Revisions during construction are generally more expensive than revisions anticipated prior to construction.

Construction Documents might take from 6 - 16 weeks, again depending upon the complexity and size of the project and the schedules of the participants. It is important not to rush this phase since this is the point at which all of the building systems designed by consultants must be coordinated with each other and with the architectural elements.

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REGULATORY REVIEWS OF FACILITY PLANS

Throughout the planning and design process, various plan reviews by governmental agencies and officials are either recommended or required.

Department of Social & Health Services (DSHS) Division of Child Care and Early Learning Licensing Review

Preliminary Review

All DCCEL regional offices offer the possibility for early design review meetings with a licensor or health specialist. The purpose of this meeting is to ensure that the schematic design you have developed will fulfill the licensing requirements. It is strongly recommended that you take advantage of this opportunity. Contact information for your regional DCCEL office is included in Appendix B. A written record of the items discussed at this preliminary review meeting is recommended, whether provided by the department or by you and approved by the department.

Occasionally the regulations governing child care centers are interpreted uniquely by individual licensors and health specialists. Contact with these individuals early, and often, in the design process is imperative to ensure that your interpretation of the regulations agrees with your licensor's interpretation. If modifications to your plans are necessary to meet DCCEL requirements, it is still early in the process and a relatively easy time to make changes without increasing the budget or compromising your program. Otherwise, you could be surprised with unexpected modifications that are required just prior to opening for business.

Final Reviews

After you submit your application for licensing, the child care licensor, health specialist and the Fire Marshal representative will need to inspect the facility. Typically the inspections of each agency occur independently once all construction work is complete. The child care licensor will need to do the final review in order to issue the license.

Building Department Reviews

Preliminary Review

Many building and planning departments provide opportunities for project review prior to the submittal of a permit application. This pre-application conference helps the design team identify any issues that might complicate later progress. There

may be a fee for this service, which is typically credited toward the cost of the building permit, but it's well worth the additional effort in early design stages. A written record of the items discussed at this pre-application conference is recommended, whether provided by the department or by you and approved by the department.

Most local building and planning departments also answer specific questions from walk-in visitors or telephone callers, but this information is generally not provided in writing.

Final Reviews

A checklist should be available from your building and planning departments describing all the items that will be required for permit application submittal. Depending upon the zoning classification, extra approvals or permits may be necessary. Be sure to ask for the help of the building and planning department staff in identifying all of the relevant issues and reviews required.

Permit plan review times vary significantly between different communities and between projects of different sizes and complexity. Your local building department should be able to give you an estimate of the time needed for plan review, which should be built into your project schedule.

During construction multiple inspections will be made by building department staff. Your general contractor will be responsible for scheduling these inspections. A final inspection sign-off will be required before a certificate of occupancy can be issued. The certificate of occupancy is required by DCCEL prior to issuing a license for your center.

CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

Selecting a General Contractor

You will need a licensed and bonded General Contractor to construct your project. Licensing ensures that the General Contractor meets Washington State requirements for being in the construction contracting business. Bonding is an insurance prerequisite to licensing, but the State only requires approximately $6,000 of bonding. Seriously consider requiring that your contractor provide performance and payment bonding for the full amount of your construction contract. This ensures that the contractor, or their bonding company, will pay for services and materials used on a project, taxes and contributions due to the state, and damages that may result from breach of contract or negligent work. The cost of a full performance and payment bond is generally 2% – 4% of the amount of the construction contract.

There are a number of ways to select a Contractor.

Negotiated Construction Cost

Based on past experience, interviews, and references from reliable sources, interview contractors and choose one with whom to negotiate a project construction cost.

Pre-qualified Bidders

Based on past experience, interviews, and references from reliable sources you may solicit a limited number of General Contractors to submit fixed price bids on your project. Evaluation of bids includes comparing prices, quality of work and quality of working relationship.

Competitive Bids

You may advertise for, or otherwise openly solicit, competitive bids from the open market, then interview contractors and check references. Evaluation of bids is typically based on the lowest price; however, be sure to retain the right to select any bid, for any reason.

Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of each option with your architect, who can provide advice based on their experience with contractors and on current market conditions and can also assist you in the final contractor selection process. Also coordinate this effort with whomever is providing your financing / funding, as they may have policies that dictate one method over another.

Construction

Once you have selected a General Contractor and agreed on the construction cost, you will need to develop and sign a written contract. Architects often use standardized American Institute of Architects (AIA) contracts that have been refined over many years to protect and hold responsible all parties to the contract. Prior to the start of construction you will want your contractor to provide you with an itemization of construction costs per category of work (known as a Schedule of Values), a construction schedule, and a list of materials and equipment suppliers and subcontractors who will be working on or providing materials for the project. If you require your contractor to provide 100% performance and payment bonding or other special amendments to their insurance you should receive these documents prior to commencing construction.

During the course of construction you or your project manager, your architect, and other appropriate consultants should meet with the contractor and appropriate subcontractors on a regularly scheduled basis, typically once a week, at the construction

site to review progress and identify items that need discussion and resolution. The contractor will also be in more frequent contact with your architect to get additional clarifications.

Typically your contractor will submit an application for payment, along with an updated Schedule of Values indicating the percentage of work completed, on a monthly basis. Your architect will certify the application, sometimes with modifications, after which you will be responsible for payment to the contractor. Your financial institution, or other funding source, may also want to visit the construction site to verify the extent of progress.

It is inevitable, no matter how well the project has been planned and documented in the Construction Documents, that there will be modifications as construction progresses. These should be evaluated through written Modification Proposals which list the physical changes, the change in cost and the change in the contract time frame, if any, that will take place if the modification is approved and implemented. All Modification Proposals approved during a given month should be incorporated into a written Change Order that, once signed by all parties, legally modifies the original contract sum and duration. These inevitable changes are the reason why you must keep a construction contingency in reserve.

Through the course of construction you will be called upon to make many decisions, including colors, finishes, light fixtures, appliances, equipment, location of mechanical features, etc. Always keep in mind your original goals and vision to inform your decision making. Remember too that there will be trade-offs and compromises involved in your selections, and that it is important to remain flexible.

Throughout construction it is your General Contractor's responsibility to call for appropriate inspections required by the building department. Upon application for your child care or school age care license, you will be contacted to schedule the required inspections by the DCCEL licensor and health specialist and the State Fire Marshal.

Regarding your project schedule, a small, simple project might be constructed in 1 – 4 months. Projects that tend to fall into this category include tenant improvements to an existing vacant space or modifications to a space that is already used as a child care center. Moderately complex projects, those that might take 2 – 8 months to build, include renovation or remodeling of an existing building with structural, mechanical, or electrical work involved, or an addition to an existing center. Major renovation projects and new construction can take as long as 4 – 12 months. Remember to incorporate some time after construction is complete to move in and set up furniture and equipment prior to your opening date.

At the completion of construction you will receive copies of all warranties and operating manuals for materials and equipment incorporated, as well as training for you and your staff in operation of equipment. Contractually, the construction work provided is under a one-year warranty from the General Contractor for defects in materials or workmanship.